

plumbeicollis, is allied to *A. cayennensis* and *A. albiventer*. The typical specimens were obtained at Jiménez, on the Atlantic slope of the Republic, about 700 feet above the sea-level.

XXXIX.—*Letters, Extracts, Notices, &c.*

WE have received the following letters addressed to the Editor of 'The Ibis':—

Northrepps, March, 1889.

SIR,—In 'The Ibis' for 1882, p. 313, I recorded the measurements, in inches and decimals, of eight specimens of *Falco minor*, and subsequently of two more at p. 107 of my 'List of Diurnal Birds of Prey.'

As all these specimens were from Southern or Tropical Africa, with the exception of one from Anjouan Island, I am desirous of placing on record, for comparison with the above, corresponding measurements of six examples of this Falcon collected in Madagascar by the Rev. James Wills and preserved in the Norwich Museum.

Presumed Females.

	Wing. in.	Tarsus. in.	Middle toe <i>s. u.</i> in.
Immature	12·85	1·90	2·10
Nearly adult	12·85	1·80	2·10

Presumed Males.

Immature in change . . .	11·15	1·70	1·85
Nearly adult	11·25	1·60	1·75
Adult	11·35	1·70	1·70
Adult	11·35	1·70	1·75

The last-named specimen is remarkable for the hind claws on both feet being yellow horn-colour; the outer and middle claws on the right foot are similarly coloured with the exception of a line of black on the outer side, the remaining claws being of the usual black colour. In this example the tarsi and feet are bright yellow, inclining to orange, strikingly different from their usual appearance in skins of this Falcon,

the ordinary colour in adult preserved specimens being blackish brown very slightly tinged with yellow.

Mr. Wills has also sent two Madagascar specimens of *Circus macroscelus*, with a note to the effect that this species frequents the swampy ground around lake Itasy and "takes fish as well as poultry;" the following are the measurements of these two specimens, both of which are adult:—

	Wing. in.	Tarsus. in.	Middle toe <i>s. u.</i> in.
Male	16.90	3.45	1.60
Female	17.70	3.75	1.80

A specimen of *Dissodectes zoniventris* sent by Mr. Wills bears the following ticket, which I think is worth recording: "Eye light brown or drab, soft skin round the eyes and mouth bright yellow. Two chamcleons in the crop."

Yours &c.,

J. H. GURNEY.

Northrepps, Norwich,
May, 1889.

SIR,—I am desirous of offering a few remarks suggested by three articles in the second volume of the recently published and very interesting 'Descriptive Catalogue of the Birds of the Argentine Republic.'

At p. 60 of the above volume the type specimen of *Buteo fuliginosus*, Selater, which is now preserved in the Norwich Museum, is referred to as a melanistic example of *Buteo swainsoni*: this was formerly my opinion also, but a further consideration of its comparatively small size leads me to believe that it is really a melanistic female of *Buteola brachyura*, as mentioned in 'The Ibis,' 1882, p. 340.

At p. 66 a doubt is suggested as to the accuracy of the statement made to D'Orbigny by natives of Patagonia that *Harpyhaliaëtus coronatus* captures and devours the Skunk, and the opinion is expressed that it is hardly probable that a bird of prey would feed on that malodorous animal; such, however, appears to be the fact, as in the Report for 1887 of the Department of Agriculture of the United States Government, amongst many curious details of the food of Raptorial

birds as ascertained by dissection, four instances are given of the remains of the Skunk having been found in the stomachs of birds of prey, the captors being, in one case, *Circus hudsonius*, in another *Buteo lineatus*, and in two others *Bubo virginianus*.

In the description of *Geranoaëtus melanoleucus*, given at p. 64, it is stated that the "abdomen is white, faintly barred across with grey," and that the female is similar to the male, but larger. It is, however, worthy of remark that in very old males the cross bars on the abdomen entirely disappear excepting those of the under tail-coverts. Judging from such specimens as I have seen, I believe that the fact of these abdominal cross bars first becoming faint and then disappearing is peculiar to the male sex, and that in the female these bars continue strongly marked and are permanent; in confirmation of which I may mention that a female specimen in the Norwich Museum, in which the abdominal cross bars are strongly marked, is known to have been more than six years old when it died, it having lived for six years in the possession of Mr. Edward Fountaine, of Easton, Norfolk. Mr. Fountaine also now has another similar living specimen, believed to be a female, which retains the cross bars unaltered, after eleven years' confinement in his aviary.

I am &c.,

J. H. GURNEY.

Keswick, Norwich,
March 9, 1889.

SIR,—It may be worth placing on record that a Green-backed Porphyrio (*Porphyrio smaragdtonotus*) which had lived at Northrepps nearly 18 years, and was possibly some years older than that, as it was in adult plumage when received, died on March 4th. Another individual of the same species which came to us along with it was 14 years old, if not more, when it died.

I attribute the longevity of these birds to their having been kept in a large movable cage which enabled them to be shifted

to fresh grass as often as necessary, and which in winter was frequently protected by a covering of matting.

Yours &c.,

J. H. GURNEY, Jun.

SIR,—While fully recognizing the friendly spirit of the criticism of the 'Zoological Record' (*Aves*) in the last number of the 'Ibis,' I think it is due to myself, as well as to the public, to make some reply; inasmuch as, with one exception—kindly attributed to America—the so-called errata are either matters of opinion or are rather referable to the Reviewer than to the Recorder. And, moreover, it is hardly fair, and is at least misleading, to include the former under the head of errors equally with matters of fact.

I shall be delighted to acquiesce in the suggestion of altering the position of the Oligomyodæ, now simply grouped with the other abnormal Oscines; but I cannot agree that the alphabetical order of the families of Passeres can cause any but fancied inconvenience to workers, who certainly know where to look at present, while under other and varying systems they as certainly do not. When a universally-accepted classification is brought forward, I will adopt it at once.

Nor, again, should I consider it wise to follow the "arrangement" of the British Museum Catalogue of Birds. Why follow the "arrangement" of a work which is divided against itself, in which it would appear that one genus (or more) is in danger of omission owing to the discordant views of the writers of the separate volumes, in which the plan is presumably that of Sundevall—artificial enough at first, and since diversified by modifications or alterations of questionable advantage; in which, in short, no one can divine what the final "arrangement" or "disarrangement" may be, or can guarantee the views of the compilers who take in hand the families still to appear?

To notice separately the alleged "errata" and "emen-danda."

P. 5. "*Certhilauda duponti*, n. subsp.," should be "*C. duponti lusitanica*, n. subsp." See p. 42.

The Reviewer himself admits that the name is given in full in the special part; in the general part it is sufficient to show that a new form has been recognized without naming it.

P. 6. "*Haliastur*" *vocifer* should be "*Haliaetus*." This is Mr. Bowker's error, but should have been corrected.

The 'Zoological Record' does not profess to correct errors of the printers of 'Ornis.' Probably the word was *Haliaetus* in the MS., though *Haliastur* is a perfectly legitimate genus, and the author may for some reason wish to refer the species in question to it. The critic's repetition of "this" is an instance of a similar slip of the pen (or press).

P. 45. *Chlorura* belongs to the Ploceidæ, not to the Fringillidæ.

Even if *Chlorura* belongs to the Ploceidæ, the mistake is due to Mr. R. Bowdler Sharpe, who puts it under Fringillidæ (*cf.* Ibis, 1887, p. 453).

P. 50. *Melilestes* belongs to the Meliphagidæ, not to the Nectariniidæ.

Here the Reviewer should have proceeded with a little of the caution he inculcates. True, the type of *Melilestes* is Meliphagine, but not so the species in question, which is referred to the genus *Arachnothera*, included in the British Museum Catalogue (ix. p. 111, pl. 1. fig. 2) under Nectariniidæ.

P. 54. *Podoces* should, in our opinion, go rather with the Corvidæ than the Sturnidæ.

A matter of opinion, as the affinities of *Podoces* have not been determined by anatomy, and its habits agree at least as well with the Sturnidæ as with the Corvidæ.

P. 54. The Sylviidæ have now become rather a refuge for the destitute. Can *Accentor*, *Cryptolopha*, and *Tharrhaleus*, in any wise be held to belong to it?

If *Accentor* and its relative *Tharrhaleus* (misspelt *Thalarrheus* in the criticism) are not to be referred, in common with the best authorities, to the Sylviidæ, we must consent to a family Accentoridæ, the necessity for which has never been shown. *Cryptolopha* appears to be closely allied to *Phylloscopus* and therefore falls more naturally under Sylviidæ

than Muscicapidæ, where Mr. R. Bowdler Sharpe has placed it.

P. 61. *Micropus melanoleucus* from Sumatra is a Pycnotine bird. *Micropus melanoleucus* of Shufeldt is a Swift, &c.

The mistake is fully admitted—the two species confounded having the same generic as well as specific name.

P. 66. The family Plataleidæ cannot be properly maintained as distinct from Ibisidæ.

A matter of opinion and one on which criticism is welcome. To be consistent, however, Muscicapidæ should be merged with Sylviidæ, Nectariniidæ with Meliphagidæ, &c.

Yours &c.,

A. H. EVANS.

[We agree with our correspondent that these *vexatæ quæstiones* are mostly matters of opinion. But we claim the right to retain our own. The idea of *Haliastur* in Africa (!) is revolting to those who care for geographical distribution, and should have been noted as incorrect. As regards the families to which *Chlorura* and *Melilestes* belong, we prefer the authority of Salvadori; see his Orn. Pap. ii. p. 443 and iii. p. 343. The arrangement of the B. M. Catalogue is certainly not perfect. But so far as the Passeres go, it will very soon be so far advanced as to enable every known species and its synonyms to be referred to, without difficulty. We trust, therefore, that when this comes to be so, the alphabetical arrangement of families (which we consider objectionable) will be given up.—EDITOR.]

Inverness, June 5th, 1889.

SIR,—As evidencing the rate at which certain species of birds are extending their range, it may be of interest to state that the Stock Dove (*Columba œnas*) bred in Sutherland this year for the first time. In 1885 it was known to have occurred at Lossiemouth, and in 1887 at least two nests were seen or taken by Mr. O. A. J. Lee on the Culbin sands in rabbit-holes.

On the 8th of March, 1888, I heard the Stock Dove in the

woods of Balnagown, in the east of Ross-shire, and the birds bred that year in the woods around Tarbat House, in the same locality. While waiting for Wood Pigeons in a small fir wood at Kintradwell, near Brira, in the east of Sutherland, on the 22nd of September, 1887, I shot a Stock Dove; and on May 19th of the present year I found a nest close to the same spot.

That, having once reached the cultivated lands which are bordered by the Moray Firth, this species should rapidly spread, is not surprising; but by what route the extension took place is so far unknown to us, though the eastern seaboard would seem to be the most probable one, there being no large area of uncultivated land or high mountain-ranges to impede it.

Yours &c.,

T. E. BUCKLEY.

The Monach Islands and Dr. John MacRury.—We have again letters both from Sir John Campbell-Orde and from Mr. John Harvie-Brown, respecting the proper spelling of these names, which have been unfortunately incorrectly given on former occasions (*cf.* *Ibis*, 1888, p. 492, and 1889, pp. 135, 260).

Naturalists in Foreign Parts.—Mr. Meade-Waldo and Canon Tristram again fled from the horrors of an English spring this year, and took refuge in the benign climate of the Canaries. During their explorations of the little-known island of La Palma of this group they were fortunate enough to make the discovery of a new Finch and a new Titmouse. The former has been already described by Canon Tristram as *Fringilla palmæ*, and the latter by Mr. Meade-Waldo as *Parus palmensis* (see *Ann. N. H.* ser. 6, vol. iii. pp. 489, 490). We hope to be able to give full details respecting these interesting species and a general account of the expedition in a future number of 'The Ibis.'

Capt. Page, of the Argentine navy, has planned a new expedition for the survey of the Pilcomayo, an important

western branch of the Rio de la Plata, which he proposes to ascend into Bolivia, in a steam-launch specially built on the Clyde for this service. Capt. Page will take with him as naturalist on this occasion Mr. Graham Kerr, of the University of Edinburgh, who will pay special attention to the Ornithology of this interesting region and, it is to be hoped, add many species to the Argentine Avifauna.

Mr. George S. Ramage, the collector engaged by the joint committee of the Royal Society and British Association for the exploration of the Lesser Antilles, or Caribbees, as it is better to call them, has recently sent home several collections of birds from Dominica and St. Lucia. He will shortly return to England to recruit his health.

Mr. and Mrs. Herbert H. Smith, who have collected so successfully for Mr. Godman in various parts of Mexico (*v. s. p.* 233), have now proceeded, by the direction of that gentleman, to St. Vincent, West Indies, where they will work in connection with the Committee for the Exploration of the Lesser Antilles, and doubtless reap an abundant harvest.

Return of Mr. Scott Wilson.—MR. SCOTT WILSON has accomplished a successful expedition to the Hawaiian Islands and is now settled at Cambridge, working out the results of his labours. He visited the following islands of the Hawaiian Group:—Hawaii, Maui, Molokai, Lanai, Kahoolawe, and Kauai. Nūhau, an island lying a short distance off Kauai, was the only island unvisited, and from it Mr. Wilson obtained a small series of birds through the kindness of the owner. Mr. Wilson has carefully attended to the distribution of the birds throughout the group; he finds several species to be extinct. We hope to give a full account of his expedition in a future number.

Transfer of Important Collections.—We understand that the Hon. Walter Rothschild, F.Z.S., has purchased Sir Walter Buller's complete series of the specimens which have

been used in the preparation of the new edition of the 'Birds of New Zealand,' as also the collection made by Mr. Whitehead during his recent expedition to Borneo and the Eastern Archipelago. It would have been more advantageous to science that both these collections should have gone to the British Museum of Natural History; but we have at any rate the satisfaction of knowing that they are not to leave the country, as was at one time thought very probable.

The Sitting Cuckoo.—In reference to Herr A. Müller's article on the supposed instance of the Cuckoo sitting on its own eggs, of which we have given a translation above (p. 219), it is right to call attention to Herr Ad. Walter's remarks on this subject in the last number of the 'Journal für Ornithologie' (1889, p. 33), although we do not see that Herr Walter has in any way disproved Herr Müller's positive statements. At the same time the verdict of the German Ornithologists' Society, who discussed the subject at their meeting in September last (*cf. op. cit.* p. 73), seems to have been given against Herr Müller and his observations.

The B. M. Catalogue of Birds.—Mr. Sharpe is making good progress with the 13th volume of the great Catalogue of Birds, which will contain the remaining families of the Oscines and the Pseudoscines. The 15th volume, containing the Tracheophonæ, which has been undertaken by the same author as that of the 14th, already published (see *Ibis*, 1888, p. 488), is about half finished, and is expected to be ready for press by the end of the year. This will conclude the great array of Passeres, which will thus occupy 13 volumes.

For the Picariæ we believe the following arrangements have been made:—Mr. Salvin, as already announced, takes the Trochilidæ and other Macrochires, Mr. Hargitt the Picidæ, Mr. Sharpe the Anisodactylæ and Heterodactylæ, and Capt. Shelley the Zygodactylæ. The Picariæ, if we are correctly informed, will require five volumes (vol. xvi. to xx.).

Bustard-hawking in Morocco.—"As our horses and mules were showing signs of fatigue, we remained at Saffi on the following day, not by any means unprofitably, and certainly not unpleasantly. During the day we experienced the excitement of hawking in Morocco. The Lesser Bustard was our quarry, and the following was the method of procedure. As soon as the whereabouts of a Bustard is discovered, the falconer lets loose his bird and runs forward, directing it by his cries and gestures. At first the Hawk flies at a low level over the field, as if in search of its prey, till, rising higher and higher, it sweeps round in graceful circles. The Bustard, knowing its danger, and that the Hawk can only strike during flight, keeps close, though in deadly terror. Now is our time to rush in. Spreading out in a line, we give our horses the rein and gallop forward helter skelter over rocks and through bushes, ever in danger of a nasty fall over hidden obstacles or from disused *metamores*. We shout and halloo till the welkin rings, to cause the Bustard to rise. Once up, the excitement redoubles. We now scream and yell our loudest, chiefly to direct the Hawk. There is a moment of wild uncertainty, till the wheeling of the Hawk stops, and down like a stone it sinks, and with one fell blow strikes its victim to the ground."—*Travels in the Atlas and Southern Morocco*, by Joseph Thomson (London, 1889).

*List of Ornithological Works in course of Publication
and Date of last Part issued.*

- BARTLETT (EDWARD). A Monograph of the Weaver-Birds, Ploceidæ, and Arboreal and Terrestrial Finches, Fringillidæ. Part III. (1889).
- BRONN'S (H. G.). Klassen und Ordnungen des Thier-Reichs, Vögel. Von Hans Gadow. Lief. 23, 24 (1889).
- GIGLIOLI (E. H.) and MANZELLA (A.). Iconografia dell' Avifauna Italica. Fasc. 44 (1889).
- GREENE (W. T.). Parrots in Captivity. Part 30 (1888).
- LILFORD (LORD). Coloured Figures of the Birds of the British Islands. Part X. (March, 1889).

- MENZBIER (M. A.). Dr. N. A. Severtzow. Ornithologie du Turkestan. Livr. 1 (1888).
- MEYER (A. B.). Abbildungen von Vogel-Skeletten. Lief. X., XI. (1886).
- OLPHE-GALLIARD (LÉON). Contributions à la Faune Ornithologique de l'Europe Occidentale. Fasc. XXIV., XXV. (1888-89).
- FELZELN (A. von) und MADARÁSZ (J. v.). Monographie der Pipridæ oder Manakin-Vögel. Lief. 1 (1887).
- RUSS (KARL). Die fremdlandischen Stubenvögel. Band IV. Lief. 8 (1888).
- SALNDERS (HOWARD). An illustrated Manual of British Birds. Part XV. (June, 1889).
- SHARPE (R. B.) and WYATT (C. W.). A Monograph of the Hirundinidæ. Parts IX., X. (March, 1889).
- SUNDMAN (GÖSTA). Finska Fogelägg. Lief. IX. (1888).

Birds from the Riocour Collection.—The British Museum has recently made a valuable acquisition in the shape of a selection from the collection of birds of the late Comte de Riocour, of Vitry la Ville, near Chalons, after whom *Elaenoides riocouri* was named by Vieillot (Gal. Ois. i. p. 42). About 150 mounted specimens have been obtained, amongst which are 18 types of Vieillot's descriptions. Besides these there is a single example of a very rare and now extinct Sturnoid bird, *Fregilupus varius*, which was formerly found in Bourbon, and of which Jules Verreaux used to boast that he had shot one of the last remaining specimens.

Anniversary Meeting of the British Ornithologists' Union, 1889.—The Annual General Meeting of the British Ornithologists' Union was held at the rooms of the Zoological Society, 3 Hanover Square, on Wednesday, the 3th May, at 6 P.M., Mr. P. L. SCLATER, M.A., Ph.D., F.R.S., in the Chair.

The Minutes of the last Meeting having been read and confirmed, the Committee presented their Report, in which,

after an explanation of the prosperous state of the finances, and of the successful completion of the last volume of 'The Ibis,' it was announced that it had been deemed advisable to make some alteration in the mode of rendering the accounts. One account, already issued to the Members, showed the cost of the volume for 1888; while a second account laid before the Meeting showed the exact balance in hand on the 31st of March last.

Since the last Anniversary one Foreign Member (General Prejevalsky) had died, and two ordinary Members, Sir Victor Brooke and Mr. George Cavendish Taylor, had resigned. The total number of Members was stated to be at present 204, viz. 174 Ordinary, 1 Extraordinary, 9 Honorary, and 20 Foreign Members. The vacancy in the list of Honorary Members remained to be filled up at the next Anniversary.

The lease of the house, No. 6 Tenterden Street, Hanover Square, having expired, the Committee had arranged that the official head-quarters of the B.O.U. should in future be at 18 Princes Street, Cavendish Square, London, W., to which communications could be addressed.

The following Ordinary Members were then balloted for and declared duly elected :—

Richard James Balston, Springfield, Maidstone

Ewen Somerled Cameron, Burgar, Evie, Orkney.

Stephenson Robert Clarke, Croydon Lodge, Croydon.

William Henry Dobie, M.R.C.S., 22 Upper Northgate Street, Chester.

Gerald Barrett Hamilton, Kilmannock House, New Ross, Wexford.

Frederick Ponsonby Johnson, Castlesteads, Brampton, Cumberland.

Arthur Purvis Lloyd (late Major 21st Hussars), Belgrave Mansions, Grosvenor Gardens, S.W.

Christopher John Naylor, Bryullywarch, Kerry, Montgomeryshire.

Bertram Savile Ogle, Hill House, Steeple Aston, Oxford.

Humphrey Patricius Senhouse, B.A., The Fitz, Cocker-
mouth, Cumberland.

William Stoate, The Colony, Burnham, Somerset.

Edward Priaulx Tennant, 40 Grosvenor Square, W.;
and The Glen, Innerleithen, N.B.

H. Howard Vyse, Stoke Place, Slough.

James B. Young (Commander R.N.), 2 Elgin Villa,
Rodwell, Weymouth.

The retiring President having been re-elected unanimously, it was agreed, after some discussion, that, in the absence of Mr. Dresser, who, it was understood, did not wish to be re-elected, the election of a Secretary should be deferred until the return of Mr. Dresser from the continent, and left in the hands of the Committee*.

Mr. Howard Saunders was elected on the Committee in the place of Mr. E. C. Taylor, who retired by rotation. The Officers for the year 1889-1890 will therefore be as follows :—

President.

THE RIGHT HON. LORD LILFORD.

Secretary.

F. D. GODMAN, ESQ., F.R.S.

Editor.

P. L. SCLATER, ESQ.

Committee.

E. BIDWELL, ESQ.

O. SALVIN, ESQ.

HOWARD SAUNDERS, ESQ.

After a vote of thanks to the Chairman the Meeting adjourned. The Annual Dinner, held at the Café Royal, was attended by thirty Members and guests.

* The Committee have met since Mr. Dresser's return and elected Mr. F. D. Godman, F.R.S., Secretary to the B.O.U.